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DEPARTMENT OF LABOR FOR ILAB/OTLA

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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ECON](#) [LT](#)

SUBJECT: LESOTHO: BETTER WORK THROUGH DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
ASSISTANCE

¶1. The U.S Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs is considering implementing a program to address worker rights through technical assistance in countries with which the United States has trade preference programs. The proposed project would focus on compliance with core labor standards, enforcing worker's rights and improving conditions for workers.

¶2. For the Lesotho government, creating an enabling environment for investment and trade is a top priority. Lesotho has already indicated a willingness to participate in such a program. They have conceptualized a program called "Better Work Lesotho," which aims to improve work conditions, ensure adherence to the labor standards, and provide responsible reporting. Unfortunately, only 30% of funding has been secured. The government of Lesotho welcomes the proposed assistance from DOL, which they hope can expedite the implementation of Better Work Lesotho.

¶3. The Embassy recommends sourcing this project out to the International Labor Organization (ILO). The ILO is internationally recognized for its work on human and labor rights, and it has the unique ability and expertise to implement such a project. In Lesotho the ILO has been instrumental in designing and executing projects that assisted the Ministry of Labor and Employment to strengthen the administration of the national law in order to comply with the principles embodied in the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Right at Work adopted in 1998.

¶4. The recent programs that ILO executed successfully in Lesotho include Improving Labor Systems in Southern Africa (ILSSA) and Towards the Elimination of Child Labor (TECL). Both programs were funded through USDOL. TECL has been able to develop comprehensive time-bound strategies focusing on child labor. The project has laid a foundation for concerted action against the Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL) in Lesotho. TECL support to Lesotho contributed to knowledge on WFCL and the subsequent country action plan to address them.

¶5. Through the ILSSA project, capacity has been built in the inspectorate division of the Department of Labor and officers are now equipped with knowledge and skills about integrated labor inspection, including occupational and safety inspections. Systems have been developed to create a database on labor market information. In addition, through the same project, the Directorate for Dispute Prevention and Resolution developed a system to store and manage data on Arbitration awards.

¶6. ILO's efforts are also evident on the issue of HIV and AIDS at the work place. Lesotho's labor market, like the rest of the country, has a high prevalence of HIV and AIDS. It is important for any project working in this area to address the long-term impact of the epidemic on the labor market. The ILO assisted the Government of Lesotho in amending the Labor Code to require employers to develop HIV/AIDS policies and programs to support infected and affected workers. The Department of Labor also established a new HIV/AIDS section, which sensitizes workers and employers on issues relating to the epidemic.

¶7. Since Better Work Lesotho is an initiative that is building on the foundations laid from these initiatives, the ILO is

already familiar with institutional structures and systems which should facilitate successful execution of Better Work Lesotho. For these reasons, we see the ILO as the ideal implementing partner for this DOL initiative.

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